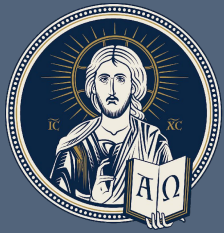


**School Leaders Academy**



INSTITUTE FOR  
CATHOLIC LIBERAL  
EDUCATION

# Parent Formation and Engagement

**Rosemary Vander Weele**  
School Leadership Academy  
Webinar

**OCTOBER 1, 2024**

# OPENING PRAYER

**St. Therese, Flower of fervor and love, please intercede for us.  
Fill our hearts with your pure love of God.  
As we approach and celebrate your feast day,  
make us more aware of the goodness of  
God and how well He tends His garden.  
Instill in us your little way of doing  
ordinary things with extraordinary love.**

**Give us the heart of a child who wonders  
at life and embraces everything with loving enthusiasm.  
Teach us your delight in God's ways  
so that divine charity may blossom in our hearts.  
Little Flower of Jesus, bring our petitions (mention in silence here)  
before God, our Father.**

**With your confidence, we come before Jesus as God's children,  
because you are our heavenly friend.  
As we celebrate the Feast Day of your  
homecoming in heaven, continue to  
shower roses and grace upon us. Amen**



# School Leaders call to Renewing Catholic Schools

## Catholic Mission and Vision Alignment

Faculty and Teachers

Parents

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Environment and Culture

# Church Teaching on the Domestic Church

The family is “the first and fundamental school of social living,” therefore, there is a special duty to accept willingly and even to encourage opportunities for contact with the parents of students.

*Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #34. Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.*

Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and societal education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs.

*Gravissimum Educationis, Pope Paul VI, 1965, #3*

# Church Teaching on Parents as Primary Educators

In the first place the Church's mission of education is in wonderful agreement with that of the family, for **both proceed from God**, and in a remarkably similar manner. God directly communicates to the family, in the natural order, fecundity, which is the principle of life, and hence also the principle of education to life, together with authority, the principle of order.

"The father according to the flesh has in a particular way a share in that principle which in a manner universal is found in God... The father is the principle of generation, of education and discipline and of everything that bears upon the perfecting of human life." [20] *St. Thomas*.

“The wisdom of the Church in this matter is expressed with precision and clearness in the Code of Canon Law, can. 1113: "Parents are under a grave obligation to see to the religious and moral education of their children, as well as to their physical and civic training, as far as they can, and moreover to provide for their temporal well-being." [23]

*Divini Illius Magistri*, Pope Pius XI, 1929 #30-34

# Who are we dealing with?



- Those who were born from the late 70s to the late 90s.
- Snowflake generation
- Digitally Native: have helped shape a culture where everyone is expected to be on all the time. (bosses, co-workers, family and friends)
- Distracted and anxious
- Major depression diagnoses are rising at a faster rate for millennials\*
- Seek advice from online platforms and internet searches.
- Faith formation weak, uncatechized and think being kind is the highest virtue.

# How does this affect parenting?

- *The new drone parents*
- Their children are labeled “iPad kids” and are dealing with behavioral and educational challenges.
- *Teaching their kids to be themselves and documenting and sharing every experience they have online.*
- Pass on anxiety and distractibility to their children- parent while “multitasking”
- *Repulsed by the idea that they have authority over their children, would rather be their friends.*
- Not overly engaged in faith formation, even if they are sending children to a Catholic school.





# What are they saying?

- ★ "Millennial parents have millions of voices every single day telling us exactly how easily and how badly we can mess this up,"
- ★ *"The parental instinct is gone within many millennial parents because we are terrified of doing it incorrectly,"*
- ★ "There's too much information all the time from every angle and we can't figure out how to trust ourselves," she said, adding that she finds herself "second guessing every single thing" she does as a parent.\*
- ★ *"I wanted to be more of their friend than their mom and give them the room to express themselves and be little people,"*
- ★ "devices are a bit like umbilical cords between young parents and their kids."
- ★ *Perhaps the biggest unknown is what it will mean for this new generation to have had every life milestone—from birthdays to baths—documented extensively online.*
- ★ "Children growing up will have multiple identities because of social media."

# Our response:

- ★ The ground is fertile, parents WANT better formation!
- ★ Now is time for school leaders and teachers and to engage parents in a pastoral way.
- ★ Catholic school renewal MUST include parent formation.
- ★ Hiring teachers who are on fire with the faith is critical.
- ★ Catholic schools must embrace and define the proper authority of parents.



# Helping Parents Understand Their Role



1. Always encourage and promote the necessity of family prayer and quality time together. Use the words Domestic Church
2. Use your mission statement or other primary collateral to communicate to parents what is expected of them. (Share Church teaching!)
3. Encourage your parents to engage in the school program- helping students learn poetry, attending Mass with their children, volunteering in the classroom.

# Parents and Their Children



“Adults who ground their parenting in a solid relationship with the child, *parent intuitively*. They do not have to resort to techniques or manuals but act from understanding and empathy. If we know how to be with our children and who to be for them, we need much less advice on what to do. Practical approaches emerge spontaneously from our own experience once the relationship has been restored.

The good news is that nature is on our side. Our children want to belong to us.”  
*Hold On to Your Kids; Why parents need to matter more than peers* Gordon Neufeld, Ph. D and Gabor Mate, M.D.

# Parents' Relationship to Students

- Relationship of parents to their student is often unbalanced,... the good news is that it always comes from good intention.
- Both students and parents need support in how to orient this relationship properly.  
(*Always* rely on Church teaching)
- Addressing this head on gives the opportunity for ongoing parent support and further buy in of the mission of the Church and the school.



# Parents' Relationship to Students

“After spending the better part of two decades micromanaging and choreographing playdates, dance practices, extra tutoring for standardized tests and college entrance exams, music lessons, martial arts, select soccer and travel baseball, track meets, art classes, language enrichment and all the rest, it should come as no surprise that the kids have only the vaguest idea of how to make decisions for themselves. All that many of them have ever had to do by age 18 is be dressed and in the car at the appointed hour.”

*The Vanishing American Adult*, page 46

**How does this change in High School?**



# Parents' Relationship to Teachers



- Our goal is reestablish the alliance between parents and teachers.
  - Reclaim the nobility of teaching and the respect due to the vocation.
- Communication is critical in this relationship- the right kind of communication.
  - Teachers should set the expectation of student responsibility.
- Strong relationships allow for honest conversations.
  - Parent/ Teacher conferences should be sources of great conversations.

The United States continues to underperform in academics. From 2000 to 2012 US has dropped significantly in ranking among other countries in academic achievement.

*\*The Collapse of Parenting page 82*

# Parents' Relationship to Administration



- The mission statement drives this relationship.
  - Mission fit families are critical.
- Trust, charity and integrity underpin successful relationships.
  - School leaders will set the tone for these relationships for better or worse.
- School leaders must take an active role in restoring proper authority to parents. Parents today are less comfortable asserting authority than parents in previous generations.

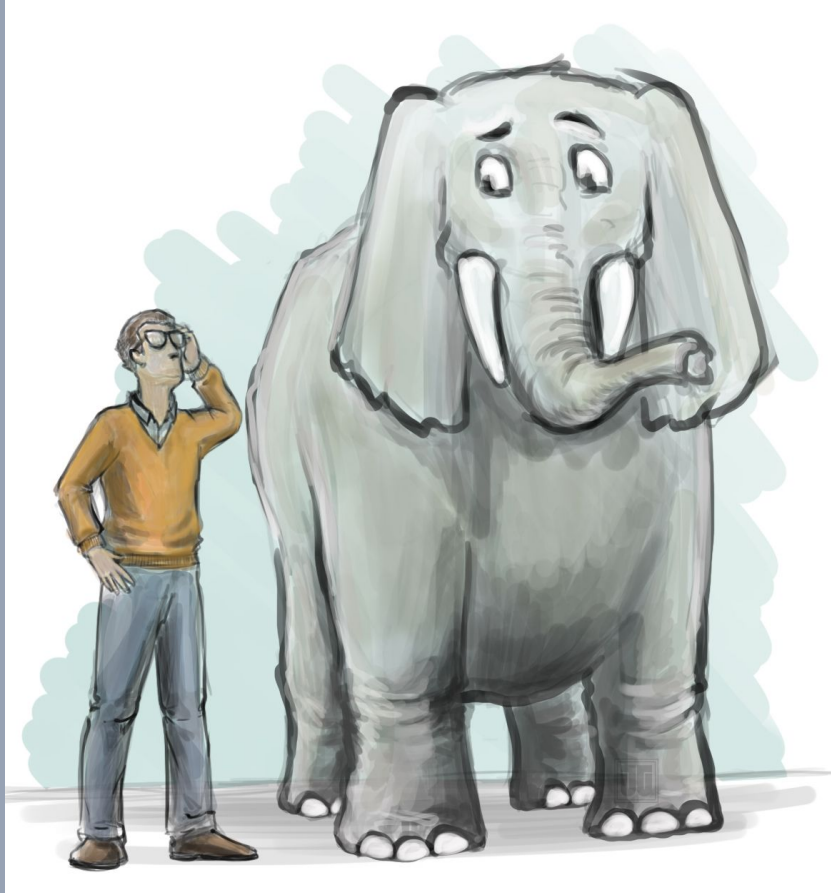


# How can we help parents:

1. PRAY for and with parents
2. Engage parents properly
  - a. Be proactive!
  - b. Always have advice/ guidance ready
3. Enter into relationship with the parents.
  - a. No mob mentality, work with the Domestic Church whenever possible.
  - b. Spend time with families- aside from teachers, this is the best investment of your time.
4. Love them enough to be honest with them, even when it stings.
  - a. Fall back on your mission and hold your parents to the same expectations you have for your students.
5. Begin formation opportunities.
6. Don't force a bad family fit.



# Parent Formation



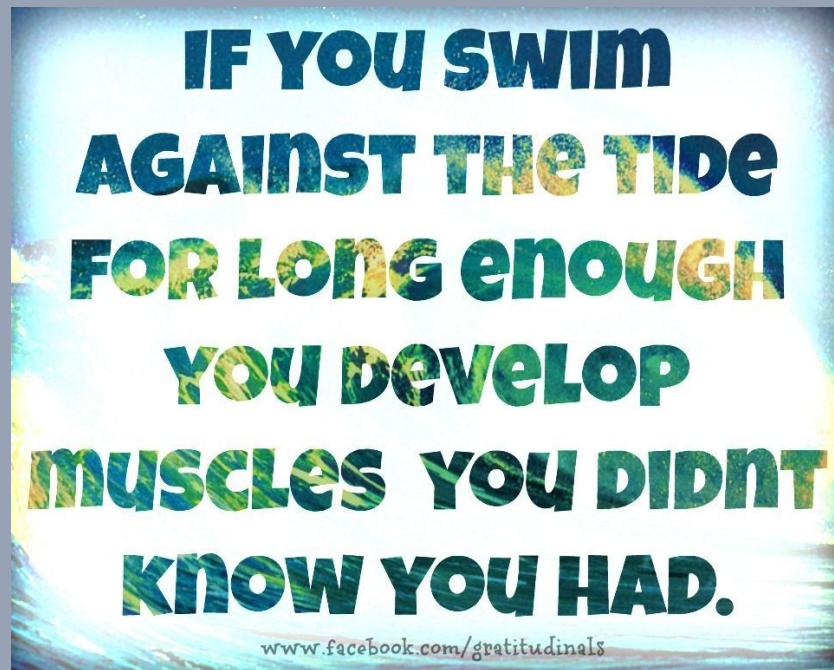
Remember, parents are looking EVERYWHERE for help in parenting! We can offer them something much better than Facebook!

Start small.

- Get your pastor/ priest involved
- Small groups with critical families.
- Plan events that will excite parents
  - Curriculum nights to showcase what students are learning coupled with parents formation.
- Summer reading assignments.
- Encounters of beauty
- Be accessible but challenging
- Use the cool club to get going

# Goals of Parent Formation

1. Give parents CONFIDENCE to swim against the tide!
2. Walk with parents in their journey of faith formation- catechize them as you catechize the children. Ignite their faith, inspire them to go deeper.
3. Restore the authority given to them by God in their role as parents. Offer formation that will support the proper way to parent- against what the culture calls parenting.
4. Restore the relationship of parents to the school- respect, partnership, collaborative rather than divisive.
5. Restore the nobility of teachers.
6. Strengthen your school community in order for families to flourish and form their children to be holy in this life and the next.



# Creating a healthy culture with parents:

- Create opportunities for parents to be involved in the school appropriately:
  - Help plan All Saints Day and feast day parties
  - Get involved in fundraising committee
  - Volunteer in classrooms for specific purposes
- Take parent concern and criticism to prayer.
- Never make decisions based on parents influence.
- Let your yes mean yes- be ok with not giving parents everything they come asking about.
- Lead with integrity- treat all parents the same.
- Keep clear boundaries.



# In Summary....

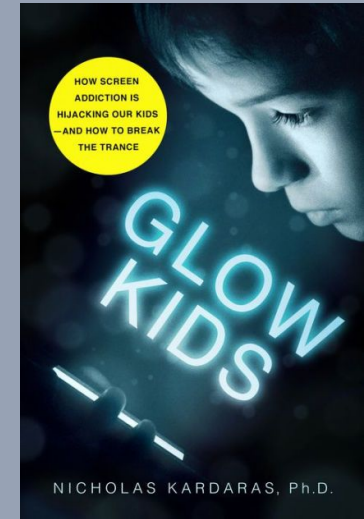
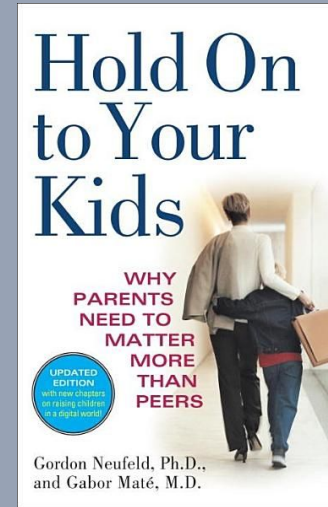
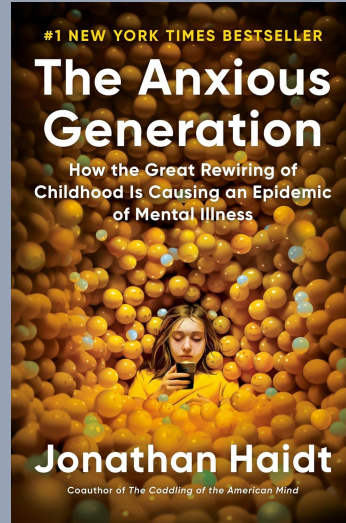
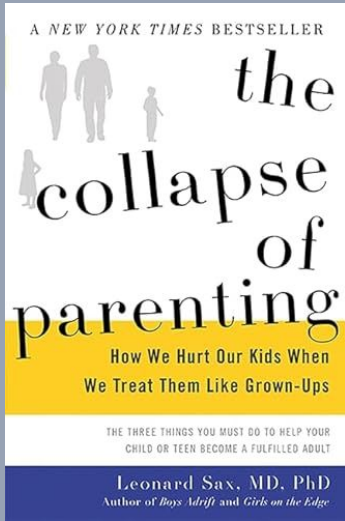
- We have Church teaching to help us understand how critical the authority of parents is in forming children.
- Millennial parents are parenting in many new ways that need to be addressed.
- Catholic school renewal *must* focus on FAMILY FORMATION
- Parents are the primary educator of their children. We must help restore the Domestic Church
- This has explicit implications for school leadership- can be either positive or negative.
- Parents' relationship with students, teachers and administration is critical.
- School leaders set the tone for the right relationship of parents in the mission and culture of the school.
- Student formation succeeds when parents and school are in partnership.
- Relationship is KEY to partnering, from K *through* 12.



# Assignments:

- After reading the monthly assignment write an educational school newsletter or parent communication sharing with parents their role as primary educators incorporating Church teaching, use the words Domestic Church
- Assess parent groups within your community: do they align with your mission? Are there actions that need to be taken to help restructure these groups to be a more positive addition to your community? **Due on Oct 30th**

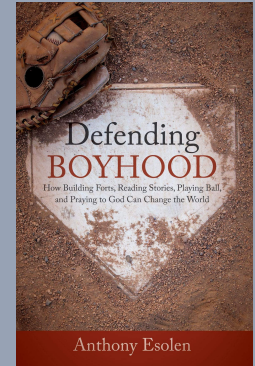
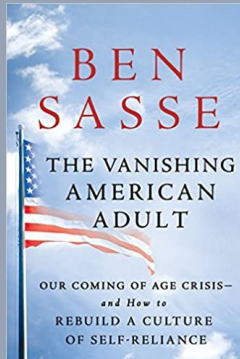
# Resources



<https://AquinasCollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/Parents.pdf>

[http://www.TheRealPresence.org/archives/Family/Family\\_028.htm](http://www.TheRealPresence.org/archives/Family/Family_028.htm)

[Dr. Arthur Hippler: The Boy Crisis | 2020 ICLE Online National Conference](#)



# Resources

